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Top European Court Rules Russia Committed Rights Abuses in Ukraine, Downing of MH17

By AFP

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A memorial to passengers of Malaysia Airlines Flight 17. **AP / TACC**

A top European court ruled Wednesday that Russia committed widespread human rights violations in its support for anti-Kyiv separatists in eastern Ukraine starting in 2014, in the downing of Malaysia Airlines Flight MH17 that year and in its 2022 invasion of Ukraine.

The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), part of the Council of Europe, found that Russia was responsible for "extrajudicial killings of civilians and Ukrainian military personnel" outside combat zones, as well as "torture," "forced labor," "unlawful and arbitrary detention" and looting.

The panel of 17 judges also ruled that Moscow had violated human rights by transferring Ukrainian children to Russia and, in many cases, arranging their adoption there.

The ECHR said Russia must "without delay" release or safely return all civilians unlawfully detained in occupied Ukraine. It also called on Moscow to cooperate with efforts to identify children transferred from Ukraine before September 2022 and help reunite them with their families.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Wednesday that Russia would not comply with the ruling, which it considers "null and void."

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The ruling is largely symbolic, as Russia was expelled from the Council of Europe following its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 and formally withdrew from the European Convention on Human Rights in September that year. However, the court still hears cases involving Russia that were filed before its exit.

The court issued its ruling in response to four cases: three submitted by Ukraine covering events from 2014 to 2022, and one filed by the Netherlands over the downing of MH17 on July 17, 2014. The passenger jet was en route from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur when it was shot down over eastern Ukraine, killing all 298 people on board.

The UN's civil aviation agency has blamed Russia for the air disaster.

The ECHR found that the suffering of the victims' relatives amounted to a violation of the right to be free from torture and inhuman or degrading treatment.

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